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THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

AUGUST 1, 1867.

THE MUSIC OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH.

BY G. A. MACFARREN.

(Continued from p. 95.)

THE standard use in the English Church of melodies constructed upon the ancient Greek scales, is objectionable; because the scales having been organised before the discovery of harmony, or the art of combining musical sounds, and the science that governs it, and these scales having been organised, therefore without regard to the laws of harmony, melodies constructed upon these scales, like the scales themselves, have not the natural basis which fundamentally regulates all modern music. Such melodies, having been constructed without regard to modern true principles of tonality, are antipathetic to modern cultivated ears, though oral cultivation have been wrought by no higher influences than that of the nurse's singing upon an infant, or that of the playing of the street bands, upon an adult. The sole exceptions from this are those instances of so-called Gregorian music, which accidentally are composed of notes that may be reduced to modern tonality, and may be accompanied, therefore, with satisfactory harmony.

Gregorian melodies dazzle, though they can never honestly satisfy, some hearers, by the grand sound of their being sung in unison by entire congregations; for it is to be noted that, in Churches where the use of this class of music has within recent years been introduced, the practice of singing among the people is much more general than in the majority of other establishments.

I have proposed that the advantage of this grand sound be given to natural melodies—melodies, I mean, constructed upon those harmonic principles which are the natural laws of musical government. Were this proposal realised, the crude calculated artificialities, which impose upon some admiring votaries by the massive sonority of their performance, would fall, must fall instantly out of favour with all who compared the uncongenial asperity of the one with the sympathetic beauty of the other, and who came to the comparison in true musical sincerity; free from the prejudices of Latinity and anti-artistic formalities.

To resolve the proposal into practical shape, I will quote an idea of Dr. E. G. Monk, which is so admirable, that it can need but to be known to be cordially supported. Let there be selected, or composed if you will, a number of original English chant tunes, the compass of which is within the range of all voices, having the reciting notes neither too high nor too low for easy declamation; let the choir sing these in unison, and so, by their powerful distinctness, impel the congregation to sing with them; and let these chant tunes be accompanied upon the organ, with varying qualities of tone, and with varying harmony, according to the varying expression of the text. The number of such chants in use in each Church should be limited, so that the memory of untutored singers might be aided by the frequent recurrence of the tunes, not perplexed by their constant change. The limitation, however might not perhaps be closer than

to one chant for each psalm, the variety of which would ever freshen the interest of the singers throughout the day's service, while the monthly repetition would preserve the melodies distinctly in their recollection. The effect of such simple natural melodies, sung in unison by the entire assembly of a church's worshippers, would be the nearest human approximation to sublimity; and the characterisation in the accompaniment, of the sentiment of the text, would add beauty to this sublime effect. Sublime—the word is used advisedly, would indeed be the effect of that performance, which could not fail to stir the inmost hearts of those who at once participated and witnessed it; stimulating the holiest feelings to vocal utterance, even to those who, having hearts that could feel, went indifferentists to the solemnity, but must become religionists in the highest signification of the term, through the magnetic influence of all that surrounded them. Beautiful—this word too is used advisedly—would surely be the effect of that changeful accompaniment, which might both suggest and express such undercurrent of thought as is embodied in the psalms, beyond the general sense, of praise or penitence, or supplication, which must animate the singers. This accompaniment might consist sometimes of concords only; sometimes of these alternated with discords; sometimes of plain, and sometimes of florid counterpoint; sometimes of purely diatonic, and sometimes, in most rare cases, even of chromatic harmony, sometimes might swell the glorious vocal unison, by reduplicating its identical sounds; sometimes might simply enforce the *canto fermo* as an upper part, and sometimes, employing this as a bass or as an inner part, might superstruct new figures of melody, new edifices of harmony, upon its foundation; sometimes might employ the most delicate stops only of the organ, sometimes might exercise the extreme power of that colossal instrument, and sometimes might wholly cease, leaving the broad richness of the vocal tone unaccompanied; in verity, the multiplicity of the wondrous resources available to a musician for diversifying the effect and the interest of such an accompaniment, can only be limited by the bounds of the composer's genius who applies them. Regardful of the diffidence of some organists and of the unskillfulness of others, I would enlarge upon this proposal to the extent of inviting the publication of a selection of one hundred and fifty of such unisonous chants, with some half a dozen varieties of organ accompaniment to each. Finally, it would be feasible when the congregation had perfect certainty, from long practice, in singing the tunes, to let the choir sing the written harmony which in more rudimentary stages of the people's performance was assigned to the organ. Thus would be reproduced the half-recorded, half-imagined, and all to be believed in magnificent character, of the church musical effects of the first days of the Reformation, with the modification that they would be translated into our present musical idiom, and that they would be enriched by all the capabilities of modern musicianship; and thus would be accomplished a method of chanting the psalms, I think, so attractive, that Gregorianism, Pagan, Popish, barbaric, crude Gregorianism, would pale away before its lustre.

In justification of what has been urged, something further is still due to the subject of so called Gregorian music.

Some writers assume that this musical system comes not from the Greeks, but from the Jews—au

assumption which carries its own confutation. The Jews are an eastern people, and their ancient musical system, like those of all eastern peoples, differed from the Gregorian system in the division of the scale into smaller intervals than semitones. Modern Jews located in Europe, whether belonging to the Polish or the Portuguese branch of their race, to that with the light hair or that with the dark, have lost their musical nationality, and adopted that of the western peoples among whom they sojourn, so that they have no special musical system, and all music they claim as their own must be of date subsequent to their settlement in Europe.

Whether of Greek or of Hebrew origin, the so-called Gregorian system has no reference to harmony. The application of harmonies to Gregorian melodies is therefore an anachronism. Few and exceptional are the Gregorian melodies which are susceptible of agreeable harmony, and these lose Gregorian character when they are harmonised. To preserve the character these had in the time of Gregory—not to say in the time of Ambrose, nor in the classic times that preceded—they must be performed without harmonic accompaniment. To satisfy the English love of harmony, certain Gregorian fragments were, immediately after the authorisation of the English liturgy, decorated or disguised with harmony. In most instances, these fragments have been forgotten, unwittingly altered, lost. I have suggested that it is desirable to purify those passages of Gregorian melody which are supposed, and if their corrupted forms sufficiently represent them, are rightly supposed to have held a permanent place in the English Church ever since the Reformation. I admit that it may be desirable, under special circumstances, that a composer occasionally, for dramatic, illustrative, or associative purposes, employ a phrase of early ecclesiastical music as a quotation, equivalent to a motto in literary composition, or as a theme for elaboration. I aver that any wider use of this obsolete system of music is repugnant to the principles of the Reformation, repugnant to English feeling, and repugnant to cultivated taste.

It is whimsically anomalous, that in numerous instances, many of the clergy who introduce the innovation of Gregorian music in the service of the churches under their control, who compel their helpless flocks to hear the Ambrosian strains, to which Marbeck adapted the English version of the Credo, who render the effect of these art savageries superlatively hideous, by their requiring them to be accompanied with harmony as uncongenial to the age of Victoria I., as it was impossible to the age of Valentinian II.—that many of the clergy who thus take their flocks back thirteen hundred years, fifteen hundred years, unnumbered ages in musical civilization, counterbalance this monstrous retrogression, by alternating the specimens of their beloved Gregorianism with examples of the most frivolous triviality in modern music, strains that vulgarise the taste of the auditors, that degrade the art, which, unhappily they represent, and that desecrate the temple wherein they are performed.

I have somewhat digressed from the subject of the chant, led, in some sort, by considerations of what was doubtless the origin of chanting. It is now to resume; and here let me spend a brief space upon the troubled question of the superiority of the single or double chant.

It is generally supposed that the double chant is a modern form, whose origin is due to the mistake of an apprentice deputy of Hinde, the organist of Gloucester. It would boot nothing to question whether or not Hinde had an apprentice, whether or not the same conveniently officiated as his deputy, and whether or not the said apprentice was—like his betters—liable to error, such error having once been the playing of two chants instead of one. It is of consequence, however, to refer to proofs recently brought forward, that double chants were in existence, and in use, before the time of Hinde's apprentice, if not of the apprentice's master. The Rev. Luke Flintoft, a minor canon of the Chapel Royal, whose double chant in G minor, is among the best esteemed of its class, was born in 1680, and the specimen in question is by no means an only one of the period when it was written. Dr. Rimbault, whose researches have unveiled this curious certainty, has shown me reasons for supposing that double and single chants came together into use, when, in the reign of Anne, or her predecessor, the unharmonised Gregorian melody from Marbeck, which stands in Edward Lowe's "Short Directions for the performance of the Cathedral Service," 1664, ceased to be authoritatively sung to the "Venite." The double chant is thus supported by an antiquity of more than a century and a half; but age brings small honour to a frivolous life, and the large majority of bad, because vulgar, double chants, seems to show the temptations of this form, and to hint that what had an evil tendency in its beginning, gathers not virtue with years.

The use of the double form is manifestly inappropriate to a congregation not disposed, locally or purposely, for antiphonal singing. In this case, the same people sing a tune long enough for two verses, instead of one, of a psalm; and there can then be no reason why three verses, or four, or the entire psalm should not have constantly changing music—why, in fact, there should be chanting at all, and not a continuous composition.

Completely different considerations arise in the case of the singers being divided into two parties, and taking alternate verses of the psalm responsively. Here I surmise that there is some support for the double form in the example of the several parts for the priest and the people throughout the service. This support, however, falls to the ground when we consider that the present method of antiphonal chanting, the method of assigning an entire verse to each side of the choir, dates not further back than the Restoration. The original method was, doubtless, to divide each verse between the two sides of the choir, the division being indicated by the colon in the prayer book rendering of the Psalms; and this division is prompted by the antithetical construction of Hebrew poetry, each verse of which constitutes a twofold sentence, comprising a proposal and its parallel. They who uphold the double chant by the example of other portions of the service, and upon the ground that response is not echo, antiphony not repetition, will find all they claim for the form they advocate comprised in the single chant, when this is performed according to the method of its original use, the authority for which, and its desirability, let me endeavour to show.

The conceit seems to me to be plausible—I will call it no more than a conceit—that the object of Gregory's addition of the four plagal modes to what

have thenceforward been called the authentic modes of Ambrose, may have been to have given different forms of the same melody to the different sides of the choir. To pursue the same view, I conceive that the specimens of music written in fourths, which amaze us with notions of the harmonic toleration of our contrapuntal forefathers, may not represent combination but response, may not show what was to be sung simultaneously, but what was to be sung alternately. I can imagine no other reason than this for the origination of the plagal modes, for the reproduction with slight modification of the authentic modes, or the distinction of plagal and authentic.

The reason is obvious for employing in the tonal fugue alternately the authentic and plagal forms in the subject and answer. This reason is that, whereas the subject modulates into the key of its dominant to introduce the answer, a modification is requisite in the answer to induce a return to the key of the tonic for the re-entry of the subject. But for such modification, each part would enter successively in the key of the dominant of the preceding, which would aptly exemplify the order of sharps, but would annul all idea of the original key. On the other hand, in the real fugue, the parts enter successively in the same key, and with the same notes, there being then, in the absence of modulation, no requirement to modify the subject.

I conceive that fugal composition is probably an extension, an idealisation, let me call it, of the practice of antiphonal singing, nay, that it entirely owes to this its origin. Grant this probability and the Ambrosian practice, with its four modes, is the type of the real fugue and of a chant of one strain; while the Gregorian practice, with its eight modes, foreshadows the tonal fugue and our single chant of two strains. In Ambrose's Antiphony, I conceive that both sides of the choir sang their alternate verses to the same notes; whereas, in that of Gregory, one choir responded in the plagal form, in the Hypo-Dorian, Hypo-Phrygian, or Hypo-Lydian mode, to the authentic form of the same melody, in the Dorian, Phrygian, or Lydian mode sung by the opposite choir.

Let me pause awhile to trace further this assumed probable derivation of the fugue. Originally, of course, the two choirs would sing in alternation, each resting during the performance of the other. It cannot be difficult to imagine that incipient art would prompt the filling up of these alternate restings with a descant or counterpoint upon the subject which was being sung by the other voices, and that they in turn would sing a similar counterpoint when the subject was resumed by the other choir. Here then we have the complete initiation of the art of fugue, if not its full development. Effectively, the real fugue has been proved so dull that its composition is now never practised, and I can indeed call to mind but one specimen of this form of construction that is accessible to the general student—the chorus, namely, that closes the first part of "Israel in Egypt." That the tonal fugue has exercised the skill of the best musicians for the last two centuries, proves, may we not believe, not only that these musicians have found its form more fruitful than the other of artistic resources, but also that it was more acceptable, since more congenial, to their hearers.

Poetically each verse of a psalm invites divided recitation, musically, the single chant is constructed with express fitness to the logical arrangement of each verse of a psalm.

If this argument for the original method of chanting have not been hitherto adduced, let me claim for it whatever attention it may merit.

The chant which I conceive to be peculiarly fit for antiphonal practice, must not be a onefold continuous piece, but a twofold composition of which the latter strain reflects, so to speak, the former. Were the ancient method of chanting resumed in cathedrals, were the two sections of a verse, and the two strains of a chant sung as originally from opposite sides of the church, the Dean's and the Precentor's sides of a choir would then stand for the negative and positive poles of a magnet, the musical circle being only completed when the melodic fluid had run its course through both, and the marriage of these two phonal sexes being consummated, when the two choirs sang together the entire chant, twice through, in what might be its authentic and plagal forms, in the doxology.

In fine; I presume Gregory's alternation of the authentic and plagal modes to have given rise, however remotely, to the form of the Anglican Chant, and to the early method of each side of the choir singing but one of its strains; and I feel that there is such animation in this method, and such fitness to the rhetorical construction to the Hebrew poetry, that its revival may be well worthy consideration.

Not to be mistaken, yet without I hope being tedious, let me here state that though I refer to the antique for the model of form, I recant nothing of what I have protested against the antique as the source of material. I would no more desire to hear the Greek musical language than the Greek verbal in the English Church; but this, I think, can be no objection to the employment of the form of subject and answer, which, I surmise, must be the essential principle of response, wherever response is otherwise than an echo—a precise repetition of the same sounds, the same syllables, as well as note. The looking-glass reverses the sides of your face, so should the answer reverse the modulation of your subject; but it is not your Athenian face or your Roman subject that is to be reversed in your English mirror or your Anglican chant.

It is now to examine what I feel to be by very far the most important portion of the musical Service; in an artistic sense certainly the most important, and in a ritualistic sense, surely inferior to no portion of the Service, if we except only the confession, the absolution, and the direct acts of prayer. I speak of those pieces which are habitually classed under the general definition, Service—the Morning Service, the Communion Service, and the Evening Service—the text of those comprised in the first and third series admitting of but one alternation, and of those comprised in the second series bearing no variation whatever; whereas the music is changed from day to day, and is susceptible of changes infinite.

In the first days of the Reformation, the English version of these pieces was adapted to the Gregorian melodies to which the Latin version had, in Papal times been sung; but in the very next following stage of the Church's progress, the use of the said melodies seems to have been discontinued—never to be resumed until the present time of barbarous innovation; and the Canticles, Creed, and so forth were set to original compositions—an example for the musicians, and for the Church in whose service they exercised their abilities, through all after ages. From the precedent of Tallis and his contemporaries, the

artist claims these portions of the Liturgy as his own peculiar province; and the claim is sanctioned by the Church's authority, and supported by the Church's practice during three hundred years. What the Mass has been to artists who have written for the Roman Communion—a theme to test their highest powers, and to inspire the noblest emanations of their genius—has been the English substitution for the Mass, and the songs of praise special to Morning and Evening Service to musicians who have wrought for the Church of this country.

(To be continued.)

THERE can be no question that, were it possible to probe the feelings of many persons who are professedly enjoying themselves, we should find that there is, at heart, an utter want of interest in what they are doing or hearing; and, in nine cases out of ten, that they are thoroughly wearied, and secretly longing for the time when the so-called "pleasure" shall come to an end. Place yourself side by side with a family of the working classes returning from a "day out," and see whether the holiday has made any one of them a bit more happy. Take the full advantage of "nine hours at the sea-side," and ask yourself coolly and dispassionately the next morning whether you really mean to do it again. Go to "Paris and back," with free admissions to all the "enjoyments," and see whether the greatest "enjoyment" is not the return to your own English home. And yet all these methods of passing the time are so fully and universally recognised that few persons allow their reason to guide them in the matter: what everybody calls pleasure must be so; and if you cannot enter into it you must not be surprised if you are called either a misanthrope or a fool.

Now we have latterly been led to the conclusion that a large number of those who habitually patronise bad music, with the notion that good music is "dreary" or "slow," are precisely in the position of the deluded individuals we have described; and that, so far from having contrasted the two styles of art and selected the one which gives them the most gratification, they have, in reality, never thought about the matter at all.

Let us walk into this music-hall. The entrance is bright and inviting, for cheerful lights and brilliant flowers are on each side of us as we tender our money for admission. We open the door; and, although we hear something, we see nothing, for a cloud of tobacco-smoke obscures every object in the room. We grope our way to a seat, and "give our orders." The utmost regularity prevails throughout the room; for an important-looking gentleman occupies the chair (with his "orders" before him on a table), and he is responsible for the good conduct of the visitors. Somebody enters on the stage, with a red nose, whitened cheeks, and his hat crushed out of all imaginable shape. A round of applause greets his appearance; for he is "jolly" by name, if not by nature. We refer to our programme, and find that he is about to sing an "immense" song, which we have been told is the great hit of the day. As the composition is comic, we are desirous of watching the effect of it upon the listeners, not unreasonably expecting that convulsions of laughter will follow every verse. The song proceeds: not a smile is raised; on the contrary, as the humour accumulates, the countenances of the audience assume an air of settled melancholy resignation. At the end the

applause is deafening; a buzz of conversation ensues, and gradually the assembly settles down to endure the next item in the programme. The following night the same numbers attend—the same scene is enacted—everybody says it is "awful fun," and the establishment flourishes.

Now let us, in imagination, transport ourselves to a conventional evening party. It has been decided that there shall be a little music; and a young lady has seated herself at the pianoforte with a something "de Salon" before her, fourteen pages long, and bristling with demisemiquavers. How much feeling for art is there either in her mind or her fingers? Has her musical faculty ever been cultivated even to the power of phrasing a single bar of the simplest Sonata in existence? In truth, music has nothing whatever to do with the exhibition, clever and brilliant as it undoubtedly is. It is equivalent to throwing up a number of balls and catching them, without dropping one; dancing on the tight-rope, without falling off; or any other feat requiring cool calculation, steadiness, and agility. But are the guests listening to her? Not in the least: the conversation is fast and furious, rising and falling with the gradations of tone in the composition under performance until the final chord, when everybody is profuse in thanks, a comparative silence reigns for a short time, and another victim is selected. Let us enquire (apart from the question of art) who is benefited by this custom? Certainly not the performer herself; for even her vanity could not have been gratified, neither admiration nor wonder having been excited by her executive powers. Yet the system continues unquestioned: the hostess knows that there must be a "little music"—there *was* a "little music," and she has done her duty.

Let us now look down from this box at the opera, upon the pit-stalls, filled with an aristocratic audience. The opera is Verdi's. The Tenor has sung himself almost hoarse; and the Soprano can scarcely sustain her voice through the last act. Two murders have already been committed; and ominous thunder and lightning portend that the unfortunate lover (who has sung his "ut de poitrine" in the last scene) means to kill himself or somebody else before the storm is over. Verdi, we are told, is the "rage." Well, let us see how this universally admitted fact is confirmed on this occasion. Few of the audience are paying any attention to the music at all: some are yawning; others have passed to the next stage of weariness, and are fast asleep: large parties are gradually leaving the theatre, and the applause is languid, and evidently given rather as a duty than as an evidence of satisfaction. Yet because Verdi is "fashionable," everything he writes for the continental opera-houses must be re-produced in England: pit-stalls are occupied; boxes are filled; and lessee and subscribers are alike satisfied.

Now, it is often said that hard-hearted critics are constantly setting up true art as a bugbear to frighten the followers of fashion from the worship of their idol. Admitting this, for the sake of argument, is it too much to expect that the disciples of a false art should at least believe it to be true? If, when one of those stern disturbers of popular enjoyments we have mentioned throws off his cynicism, and, in a beneficent frame of mind, observes a congregation at its worship, he finds that there is little real faith in any of the assembly; that some are talking, some laughing, some yawning, and all weary,